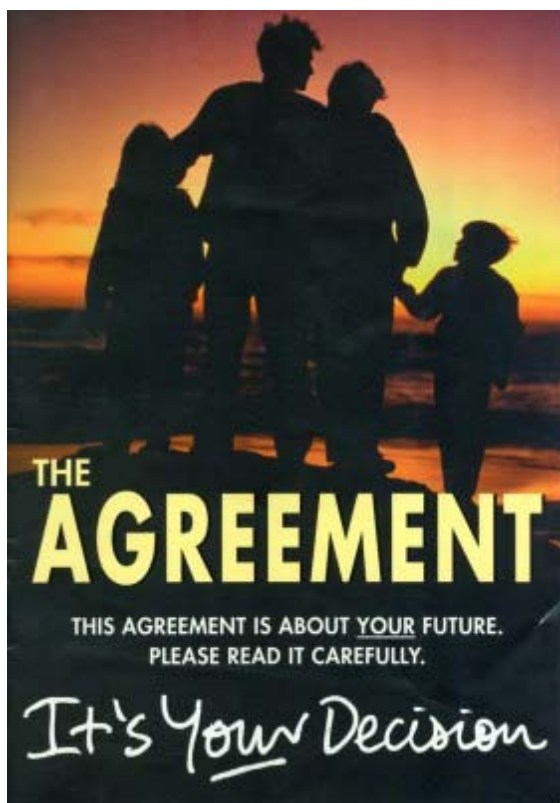


workerspartyelection.wordpress.com

Twenty years later – hopes cynically dashed

workersparty.northern ireland

3-4 minutes



Twenty years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, and with the institutions in-operative for over twelve months, the hopes that were raised in 1998 have been cynically dashed by the sectarian power blocs that still dominate Northern Ireland.

Momentous advance

The Agreement offered new possibilities. It was undoubtedly a momentous advance.

After thirty years of miserable sectarian terror the participants in the

major sectarian blocs began to establish the basis for a settlement within which nationalists and unionists could reach some form of accommodation without relinquishing, in practice, their respective long-term constitutional ambitions. Of course, not everyone agreed.

Nationalist irredentism and unionist extremism combined in opposition to the Agreement. The people, however, said “yes” to the Agreement.

Limitations

We recognised the limitations of the Agreement and expressly noted that it failed to reflect many of the concerns raised by the Workers’ Party over the previous 30 years.

However, the Party welcomed the Agreement as a realisation of the hopes of the people of Northern Ireland and as an opportunity to advance the long-standing and consistent Workers’ Party demand for devolution and the Party’s programme of Anti-Sectarianism, Peace, Work, Democracy and Class Politics.

Institutional Sectarianism

An Agreement constructed on the faulty foundations of sectarian division; an institutional framework which incorporates sectarianism at its core and an Assembly and Executive which effectively manages sectarianism, rather than seeking to eradicate it, will not and cannot deliver for the working class and the process becomes a recipe for competing and conflicting communal interests, continuing division and open sectarian conflict.

Lowest common denominator

The refusal of the unionist and nationalists to keep the focus on the big picture – the creation of a new Northern Ireland – and their decision to pander to the lowest common denominator

within their own constituencies robbed the Agreement of what was advanced as its essential political underpinnings which marked it out as a new departure, the so-called historic compromise.

Continuing division

An Agreement constructed on the faulty foundations of sectarian division; an institutional framework which incorporates sectarianism at its core and an Assembly and Executive which effectively manages sectarianism, rather than seeking to eradicate it, will not and cannot deliver for the working class and the process becomes a recipe for competing and conflicting communal interests, continuing division and open sectarian conflict.